

Highland Council

Allotment Policy 2024



This policy sets out the Council's approach to the provision and operation of allotments across Highland. In line with our duties under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 the Council is committed to providing and protecting allotments.

Key requirements under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (later referred to as the Act) are to:

- Provide and protect allotments
- Maintain allotment waiting lists
- Take reasonable steps when waiting list trigger points are reached
- Put in place allotment rules and regulations
- Produce annual allotment reports

This policy has been developed in line with the duties under the Act.

Objectives

The Highland Community Food Growing strategy objectives that this policy supports are:

- Communities are empowered to start growing or expand their growing
- Identify potential allotment and growing spaces
- Support communities to become more resilient through community food growing

Summary - Policy Aims:

- 1. Support and promote the development of sustainable allotments as a community asset**
- 2. Promote allotments as part of the solution and response to climate change and biodiversity loss**
- 3. Ensure good and effective allotment management**
- 4. Increased provision of allotments**
- 5. Increased public awareness of how to access an allotment plot**

1. Support and promote the development of sustainable allotments as a community asset

The Council recognises the role that allotments play in improved health and wellbeing, inclusion, and community resilience. Allotment development in Highland will:

- Encourage inclusion of community spaces as part of the design of allotment sites, including co-location and collaboration with community projects.
- Encourage links to be formed between allotments and local food resilience projects, such as community larders and lunch clubs, to reduce food waste, and share the benefits of fresh grown local food across the community.
- Support the growth of a circular economy; seeking the reduction and creative use of waste, and localised sourcing of skills and resources will be promoted within Highland allotments.

2. Promote allotments as part of the solution and response to climate change and biodiversity loss

Allotments are a part of the Council's approach to improving land use for biodiversity enhancement, reducing emissions, and adapting to climate change. Allotment development in Highland will:

- Encourage environmentally sustainable management approaches for allotments sites.
- Promote the environmental benefit of allotments.

3. Ensure good and effective allotment management

Good and effective allotment management is key to ensuring successful allotment provision across Highland. Allotment development in Highland will:

- Support community led allotment sites, managed by well-structured and supported allotment associations.
- Promote and develop positive partnerships between the Council and allotment associations.

Management approach

- A devolved management approach is adopted in Highland to enable community led allotment sites. Allotment associations are best placed to be responsive to the localised needs of their allotment sites and plot holders as well as being cost effective in their management.



- The Council will work with allotment associations to ensure a devolved management approach is effective and clearly defined roles and protocols are established in line with this policy and the Act.
- The Council will set rules and regulations for Highland allotments, in partnership with allotment associations, that best enable clear and effective management of sites.
- The Council will support allotments associations in establishing their governance and assist ongoing good governance practice, following guidance from bodies such as Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society and the Highland Third Sector Interface.

Waiting list management

- Responsibility for the management of waiting lists will be devolved to allotment associations. Members of the public will continue to contact the associations to request a plot.
- The Council will manage its duties regarding awareness of demand for allotments through annual data sharing arrangements with allotment associations and analysis of our allotment register of interest that members of the public can join through our website.

Leasing land

To support allotment associations:

- Where possible and subject to appropriate decision making, the Council will lease land identified for the provision of allotments to an allotment association, which is properly constituted, incorporated, and governed.
- Leases to allotment associations will offer security over the land to the associations, by offering a 19-year 11 month lease, without 1 year break clauses which have previously been in place.
- The Council's legal costs will not be passed on to allotment associations when entering lease arrangements with the Council, in line with current practice for community food growing projects. Allotment associations will be expected to meet their own legal costs.
- The Council has a legal duty to provide and protect allotments as well as a duty to secure best value. In respect of allotments located on Council land, the rental charge applied will be £1 per year if asked. In respect of Common Good land, the Council also has an obligation to have regard to the interests of the inhabitants of the former Burgh area. In light of this regard, rental arrangements for allotments located on Common Good land will continue in accordance with the Common Good policy.



4. Increase the provision of allotments

To support allotment development in Highland the Council will:

- Identify and review levels of demand for allotments annually.
- Respond to demand on a strategic level and enable sites to establish where there is known high demand for allotments.

Planning and land use

- The Council will allocate sites for allotments within its local development plans, where sufficient demand is identified through the plan preparation process and will take planning decisions in line with the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) policies which places greater emphasis on food growing and allotments.
- When planning applications for developments are submitted, the Council will, as far as possible, safeguard areas for allotments and community food growing as identified in local development plans.
- Information gathered on demand for allotments will help guide land management decisions and planning for council housing developments.
- The Council will identify suitable Council owned land that could be used for community food growing including allotments and make this information available to the public.
- The Council will support allotment associations to engage with Council services to identify Council owned land and negotiate land use.
- When high demand is identified in areas where allotments already exist on Council land, we will work with the existing allotment associations to make the best use of the existing site, and where possible to identify land for expansion of the site.

Developing land

- The Council will offer community groups who are planning allotments pre-application planning advice for free. Advice will give consideration as to design, layout and servicing, and advise on the fees of a planning application.
 - For Council owned land, help will be given to allotment associations to verify suitability of any land identified (i.e. soil, drainage, contamination).
 - The Council will explore the opportunities where practically possible to support the planning and foundation stages of projects on Council owned land to enable projects to establish.
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- Where a need has been identified, planning and foundation stages for allotments will be incorporated into new Council housing scheme developments.
- The Council will not agree to the disposal of allotment sites on Council land during lease terms without the consent of the allotment association.

Allotments on land owned by third parties

- The Council is committed to working with its public sector partners and with private landowners to identify land for allotments. The Council will consider the leasing of third-party land for allotments when it is in the best interest of the allotment site to do so or is requested by the landowner.
- Where the Council is leasing land from a third party and subletting it to an allotment association, the provisions in this policy will apply. In such cases, the costs to the Council of leasing the land will be passed on to the allotment association and will be kept to as low a level as is possible.

5. Increase public awareness of how to access an allotment plot

To support allotment development in Highland:

- Annual reports on allotment provision and information about how to access an allotment will be accessible and available to the public on the Council's website.
- Individuals will be able to register their interest in an allotment plot through the Council's website or other contact channels and this will contribute and influence strategic decision making on future allotment provision.
- The Council will provide guidance on developing allotments to any individual or group who contacts the Council expressing an interest in establishing a new site.
- Equal access will be promoted, and support opportunities will be signposted to.
- Easy read summaries of documents will be provided.



Sources of support in the Council

The Council's contaminated land team offer free advice on the use of land for community food growing and will help assess if there are any concerns regarding contamination of land.

[Contaminated land](#)

[The Community Support and Engagement team](#)

[Planning advice](#)

Links to other related policies, strategies and legislation

Highland Community Food Growing strategy: [Growing our Future and supporting guidance](#)

Highland Council's [NetZero Strategy](#)

Highland Council's [Local Development Plans and policies](#)

Highland Council's [Open Space in New Developments Guidance](#)

[Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)

[Good Food Nation \(Scotland\) Act 2022](#)

Scottish Government's [National Planning Framework 4](#)

Highland Council's ecological strategy

External sources of support

[Highland Third Sector Interface](#)

[Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society](#)

[Get Growing Scotland](#)

[Social Farms and Gardens](#)

